My comment to this new bill is that ten million dollars distributed equally amon 200,000+ Deaf Blind people is only $500 a piece. Technology is not $500; the majority of the equipment can cost up to $5000 or more! Even a pair of hearing aids add up to $10000.00! I feel that ten million is an inadequate amount to provide equipment; training and assist in research and development for future technology!

Also, the income guidelines should be extended to include Deaf Blind individuals who are in the middle class income range. These equipments are not easy to afford! In the past couple of years, I have acquired a number of equipment to help me in my deaf blindness and still need more. This equipment cost almost $10,000. The accessories; supplies are also expensive. For instance, to buy hearing aid batteries every month is expensive. As well as supplements that our eye doctors are asking us to buy. These cost approximately $8 a bottle. To live independently, we need equipment to help us shop, work, play?.even to live in our homes and do normal activity it is expensive. Right now, I need a talking thermostat so that I can determine how to set my AC/Heating system. I also need voice assistance to find out who is at the door when the door bell rings. I can?t just simply peek through the peephole anymore or ask who it is through the door and understand what they say. There is also a need for some Deaf Blind for assistance equipment to order a meal like normal people do at McDonald?s, Burger King and etc.

To conclude this?even if we distributed ¼ of the money for training and another ¼ for research and development; ten million dollars is inadequate to provide what the Deaf Blind need in order to maintain any semblance of communication independence in today?s society. However, ten million dollars is a beginning?I hope Congress is planning to continue to fund this program in the future.

Sincerely,

Darlene Laibl-Crowe

Added comments:

Here are my suggestions

Optelec?(video magnifier) a must have in order to read and etc (Optelec JR) for portability

Cell Phones?CONTRAST?must have the opportunity to change the background and the font?for instance, black background with shite text and must have ability to increase font size.

Currently, I have Mobile Speak from ATT?but I cannot understand what he says and it would be beneficial if I had the contrast and the ability to adjust the font size so I can follow along with what the speaker says.

Cellphone must be able to help in troubleshooting to help a DB select the right phone and use the phone?not have a sighted person work with the phone and then expect them to train the DB?doesn?t work that way.

Also, technology to shop with, to communicate in the public?for instance?something to read the products; read the menu, even read the debit card gizmo! DB cannot use the debit card thingies with the pen to key in the pin number.

So many areas in which DB have a hard time. I don?t know if these are good suggestions but they

are for me and?other areas in which to make their lives easier at home. Security systems w/ voice?.AC/Heat thermostate?talking ones!!!

A DB cannot use the keyboard that the cell phones have?so normal phone pads are best?

GPS?tell DB which way traffic is flowing?.if any obstacle in front of them as they are walking?many things.

Websites needed to allow a DB like me who has specific colors to allow those colors to be used instead of the websites colors?give the viewer the benefit to change background, font color and size. Also templates?so many of the software and the website in which you can create your own web page have templates that are not viewable with the black background and white font and the template look all white to me. It would help if a user was able to change the preferences on the webpage ? for instance, PDF used to be like that but now they have ?preference? on their Edit menu?.

Final comment:This past year I purchased a cell phone through the National Disability Center of AT&T. The center assured me that the phone would meet my needs Unfortunately, I have been unhappy with it and not able to use it as I should be able to. I can only use it to answer and call by using the speed dial voice dial system. I cannot use the texting, the internet, the GPS or even access my phone contact list. I can not determine who has called?for instance, ?missed call? .

I purchased a software called Mobile Speak which I cannot understand?I have been trying to work with AT&T and the National Disability Center but we are not able to connect to get this resolved. When I talk with disability center they want a sighted person to help with the phone but don?t tell me how to use it. I take it to their store but the reps there do not know what to do either. I am at a loss and they are at a loss at what it is that I need! I paid way too much to be able to only be answering the phone and using speed dial to access voice dial to call out. I should be able to use texting, internet and GPS.

Sincerely,

Darlene Laibl-Crowe